

Commas . . .

648.1

To Set Off Appositives

Commas set off an appositive from the rest of the sentence. An appositive is a word or phrase that identifies or renames a noun or pronoun.

The capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, has a population of almost 643,000. (*Nicosia renames capital of Cyprus, so the word is set off with commas.*)

Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, is about half the size of Connecticut. (*An island in the Mediterranean Sea identifies Cyprus, so the phrase is set off with commas.*)

Do not use commas with appositives that are necessary to the basic meaning of the sentence.

The Mediterranean island Cyprus is about half the size of Connecticut. (*Cyprus is not set off because it is needed to make the sentence clear.*)

648.2

To Separate Equal Adjectives

Use commas to separate two or more adjectives that equally modify the same noun.

Comfortable, efficient cars are becoming more important to drivers. (*Comfortable and efficient are separated by a comma because they modify cars equally.*)

Some automobiles run on clean, renewable sources of energy. (*Clean and renewable are separated by a comma because they modify sources equally.*)

Conventional gasoline engines emit a lot of pollution. (*Conventional and gasoline do not modify engines equally; therefore, no comma separates the two.*)

Use these tests to help you decide if adjectives modify equally:

1. Switch the order of the adjectives; if the sentence is clear, the adjectives modify equally.

Yes: Efficient, comfortable cars are becoming more important to drivers.

No: Gasoline conventional engines emit a lot of pollution.

2. Put the word *and* between the adjectives; if the sentence is clear, use a comma when *and* is taken out.

Yes: Comfortable and efficient cars are becoming more important to drivers.

No: Conventional and gasoline engines emit a lot of pollution.

Practice

Commas 3

■ To Set Off Appositives



For each sentence below, write the appositive phrase as well as the noun it renames. Set off the appositive with commas.

Example: Reginald Fessenden a Scotsman living in Canada made the first voice broadcast on radio in 1906.

Reginald Fessenden, a Scotsman living in Canada,

1. Edwin Armstrong developed FM radio a signal offering clearer sound than AM radio.
2. Lee DeForest the "father of radio" used some of Armstrong's and some of Fessenden's ideas.
3. David Sarnoff another radio pioneer later moved into television, forming NBC.
4. Many other inventors people from all over the world added to the growth of radio.

■ To Separate Equal Adjectives



For each sentence below, write the adjectives that need commas between them. Add the commas.

Example: Lee DeForest was a vain determined inventor.
vain, determined

1. In the wild crazy years of the 1920s, radios become very popular.
2. During the Depression, even poor jobless people had radios to brighten their lives.
3. Soon, companies were designing radios with beautiful wooden cabinets.
4. A huge cabinet radio was often the main piece of furniture in a living room.
5. Now the demand is for smaller lighter radios.